

AARP WI: To recognize Madison man for his commitment to community service with its top volunteer award

Posted on Monday, Nov 21, 2022

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MADISON, WISCONSIN – Madison resident Neil McCallum has been selected by AARP – the nonprofit organization for people age 50 and older – to receive the 2022 AARP Wisconsin Andrus Award for Community Service, which is the Association’s most prestigious and visible state volunteer award for community service.

AARP Wisconsin selected McCallum for his remarkable service, which has greatly benefited the Madison community and the entire state while also reflecting AARP’s vision and mission, and inspiring other volunteers.

He is being honored for serving as the Wisconsin State Coordinator for the AARP Driver Safety Program for the past five years, as well as his volunteer work with several other charitable organizations.

“This award honors Neil’s tireless commitment to making life better for those around him,” said AARP Wisconsin State Director Martha Cranley. “Through his leadership with our Driver Safety Program, his love of bicycling, and his many selfless avenues of volunteering, Neil has built up the trust, influence and respect it takes to accomplish great things. He is an inspiration to us all.”

Cranley said this award acts as a symbol to the public that we can all work together for positive social change. “AARP has long valued the spirit of volunteerism and the important contributions volunteers make to their communities, neighbors, and the programs they serve,” she said.

McCallum was nominated for the award by Wayne Wiese, a longtime friend and fellow volunteer with the AARP Driver Safety Program.

“Neil continues to impact and inspire the 50-60 volunteers who are part of the driver safety program in Wisconsin,” Wiese said. “Through his leadership, Wisconsin has fared much better in comparison to other states by addressing the loss of volunteers due to the pandemic.”

McCallum has taught more than 40 driver safety classes over the past six years, recruiting several new volunteers for the program along the way. “His demeanor and teaching style receive continued praise and admiration by those who he connects with,” Wiese said.

McCallum said he is deeply appreciative of the award. “Throughout my life, fulfillment has come from seeing a need and using my gifts to serve. This award acknowledges how we can make our community better by sharing our love and talents.”

In addition to his work with AARP, where he also serves as a member of the Association’s statewide volunteer Executive Council, McCallum is a board member of TRIAD of Wisconsin, which connects law enforcement, older adults and social services.

He also serves as Secretary Treasurer and Genealogist for the Clan MacCallum Malcom Society of North America, a non-profit organization that promotes Scottish heritage.

An avid bicyclist, McCallum also volunteers for “Wheels for Winners,” a Madison-based organization that gives out 300 renovated bikes to anyone who has committed to perform 15 hours of service to their community. He serves as vice chairman and shop manager for the group.

He also served as the alumni coordinator and route leader for the “2022 Bike the U.S. for M.S.” (Multiple Sclerosis) ride from Virginia to California.

“Neil’s hands-on involvement in these organizations through things like fixing bikes and providing them at no cost to those in need in the Madison area, the biking himself across the U.S. to raise money for a truly worthy endeavor such as M.S. has inspired others to join this effort to help out,” Wiese said.

If all of that isn’t enough, McCallum has also donated blood/plasma to the Red Cross on a regular basis over the past 53 years, and is active with a group called

Findagrave.com, which is a website that documents graveyards. He has documented several cemeteries in Scotland, Canada and the U.S. Just in the Forest Hills Cemetery in Madison alone he has uploaded about 27,000 photos of grave markers.

As part of his award, McCallum was given the opportunity to select an organization to receive a \$1,000 donation from AARP. He said he will donate all the money to the "Bike the U.S. for M.S." program.

McCallum, 73, and his wife, Shirley, have two grown children and have lived in Madison for the past 17 years. He is retired from his 37-year career as a hospital architect/project manager.

Recipients of the Andrus Award (named after AARP founder Ethel Percy Andrus) in each state across the nation are chosen for their ability to enhance the lives of AARP members and prospective members, improve the community in which the work was performed, and inspire others to volunteer.

"Neil clearly goes above and beyond the definition of the word volunteer," Cranley said. "He serves as an inspiring example of the phrase 'service before self.' He is committed to doing whatever he can to make life better for those around him. Neil is truly one in a million."

The award will be presented to McCallum during a ceremony this afternoon at the Vintage Brewing Company in Madison (see details below).